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RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 6289
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RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 9956
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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - DESTRUCTION OF
SATELLITE

11. LEAD STORIES: All Tuesday morning papers front-paged Prime Minister Fukuda's summit with new South Korean President Lee Myung Bak in Seoul on Monday, during which the two affirmed the resumption of reciprocal visits and enhanced trilateral coordination with the U.S. on North Korea.

12. "Destruction of Satellite Raises Concern about Arms Race in Space" The business-oriented Nikkei editorialized (2/26): "As the U.S. followed UN guidelines in shooting down a satellite recently, that action cannot be termed a violation of international rules. At the same time, what took place was far from ordinary.... One could speculate that the U.S. took advantage of the falling satellite to essentially carry out a drill aimed at shooting down a satellite or intercepting a missile. The U.S. may have wanted to display its missile defense capabilities to North Korea and Iran.... The U.S. move may prompt other nations to follow suit and cite a falling satellite as an excuse to conduct an intercept test. If other countries try to compete over satellite attack capabilities, an arms race in space could be unleashed. A framework is needed to stop nations from readily destroying satellites."

13. "MD: Legacy or Burden?" The liberal Mainichi's Washington bureau chief Bando wrote (2/26) "It is questionable whether the U.S. military's motives concerning the recent destruction of a satellite were clear enough. While the prevention of potential damage caused by the satellite's toxic fuel was cited as the reason for its destruction, the chances of a satellite

falling onto a densely populated area are extremely slight. The normal course of action would have been to carefully monitor its descent.... A more natural interpretation of the event is that the U.S. military, in the process of considering how to deal with the falling satellite, opted to destroy it as a means of killing two birds with one stone. President Bush approved the operation in the hope that MD will be a legacy of his administration.... However, some in the U.S. are concerned that MD deployment will aggravate ties with Russia and China or unleash an arms race in space. There is a possibility that the Bush administration's 'legacy' will turn out to be a burden for the next administration."

SCHIEFFER